

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November Richard Atkinson  
Blessed are the peacemakers

Good morning and welcome to this Friday Father's house devotional.

This morning I'm going to just talk a little bit about some things that have been a challenge in my life and how God has helped me through it. And it's this and the title of this morning is 'Blessed are the peacemakers'. And I'll read this: this comes from Matthew chapter 5, and is verse 9. I'll read what it says, I'm reading from the Amplified so there's lots of bits in brackets, which I'll leave out. It says this: 'Blessed are the makers and maintainers of peace, for they shall be called sons of God'. And the challenge in my life has been that I wasn't necessarily a peacemaker. I was a peacekeeper, and often that would manifest itself in people, perhaps having a temper or doing something, doing some bad behaviour or whatever, which I knew was wrong, but I would often not say about it. And one of the things that God has changed in me is that I have moved from a peacekeeper to a peacemaker. And the two roles are quite different, a peacekeeper will often for me... I would just keep my mouth shut and I wouldn't challenge the situation because I feared the consequences. So the route was fear, it wasn't love.

And it was a manifestation in my life for many, many years, until God did a work in me and particularly in the area of intimidation. Sometimes when we're around people that are intimidating, it's easier just to keep our head down, and whatever, and avoid the problem. But that actually doesn't solve the issue. It doesn't bring anything to the situation and God changed me in this area and is still changing me. Recently I've had an incident, I've had a situation in my life where I've had to challenge and it's been you know, it brought back... I felt very intimidated and whatever. But I knew that God was with me and I had to stand my ground. And being a peacemaker can be a difficult task, can be a thankless task. It can be something that you don't get any reward for necessarily, but it's something we're all called to do.

2 Corinthians chapter 5 says that we all have a ministry of reconciliation, I'll read it to you: this is 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 18-19. 'But all things are from God, who through Christ Jesus reconciled us to himself, received us – read the brackets as well – received us into favour brought us into harmony with himself, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation that by word and deed that we might bring others into harmony with him. It was God personally in Christ reconciling and restoring the world to favour with him, not counting it up and holding it against them – that's us – holding against men their trespasses, but cancelling them and committing us to the message of reconciliation and the restoration of favour'. Now, the interesting thing about a peacemaker is, they make the move. And sometimes the move is not received in the way that you desire. Sometimes it's not welcomed, but that's the ministry that's we are called to, blessed are the peacemakers and if we look at the situation, Jesus was the ultimate peacemaker. Jesus was the ultimate peacemaker; He came to make peace between God and man. And the initiative, it says in Corinthians, came from God, He knew that we weren't going to be able to do that and we'd end up in this standoff and how many situations do you know where peace needs to be re installed or reconciliation needs to be where actually there's a kind of a standoff – 'well I'm not going to say anything until they say something and they're not going to'..., and you end up with these two sides. And I would also say the longer you leave it, the harder it becomes, doesn't make it impossible, but the harder it becomes. I would say, you know, keep short accounts, the Bible tells us to keep short accounts.

For me, as I said, I've moved these days from being a peacekeeper to being a peacemaker. And the other thing I would say, one thing I recognise, is that when I'm being intimidated by say a person, or somebody or whatever, fear is involved. And I would put this out there that fear has nothing to do with the kingdom of heaven. So there's an enemy out there that doesn't want reconciliation or doesn't want peace, or doesn't want you to live in peace with your neighbour, your family, whoever it might be. But Jesus is our example.

And as I said, sometimes it's not the easiest task, if you have a look at the fact of Jesus on the cross, where in those moments, He's abandoned, He became sin, and He's abandoned by God, and men are stoning... you know, have done all those horrible things to Him and eventually nailed him to a cross so that He might die and yet He was the ultimate Peacemaker. He did it, that we might have reconciliation with God, and that we might live in peace with God, and not bring on us His wrath for our sin.

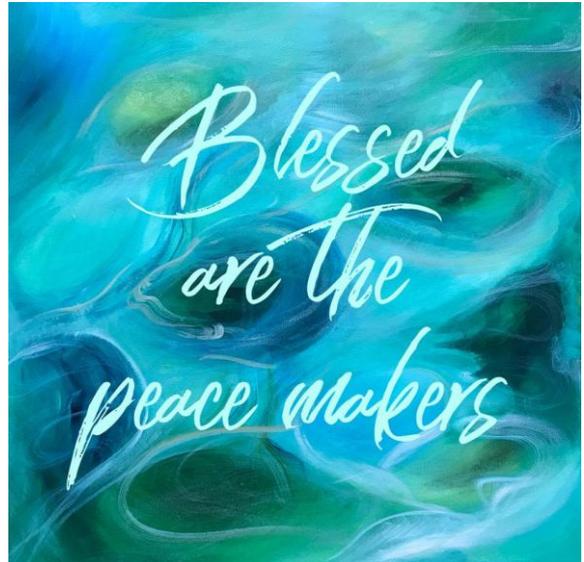
So has it been easy? No, it hasn't been easy. Sometimes my challenge of people in their behaviour in the peacemaking mode has cost me relationships. But what I also used to find was when I was a peacekeeper, there was something eating away inside of me, knowing that whatever was going on was wrong. Knowing that I needed to be the one, you know, and I was in my foxhole with my tin helmet on, just keeping my head down, and if I can stay here long enough, this will all go away. Well, generally, things like that don't go away and it's trying to, it's courage, peacekeeping involves courage and humility, it's reaching out as well. You know, the number of times I've talked to people, and I find out that there are, even in Christian circles, there are broken relationships. It's really difficult. But we're called to a ministry of reconciliation with our brothers and sisters, our families, our Christian family, our neighbours, whoever that might be. But we're also called into reconciliation with God by us reconciling with the people that we need to be reconciled with. We bring that person into the chance to be reconciled with God does it mean we have to be a doormat, absolutely not. Does it mean that we have to put up with bad behaviour, no, not at all. And sometimes the best way of being a peacemaker is to stand and say, that's not happening. It's not happening.

But I would just this morning, for me, this has been a challenge in my life, but I've realised that every time a situation comes up, I've had a situation beforehand that has had echoes of what I'm facing. So I've realised that God has moved me when, in my life, early on, I've had to deal with intimidating people and I used to bury my head in the ground, and just avoid them or have kept the peace at all costs, because I didn't want to hear that, or their temper. But slowly and surely, I've realised that God has engineered in situations that have helped me through that, given me the courage to step out and given me the courage to say 'no, your behaviour's out of line, that's wrong'. But not be unkind about it, as I said, done with humility. Anyway, there are a few things I've got here that might help you out. I'm still learning about this. It's still a challenge to me. I was listening to a guy yesterday, and the first thing he said was 'Be prepared to give up your rights', you can do but it doesn't mean you settle for somebody else's bad behaviour. The second one was an interesting one and this is where God gave us the example, 'move towards the trouble', because if we move away from the trouble, the gap becomes wider and wider and thus, we're usually not able to sort it out. It usually becomes harder to sort it out.

Now if you think about it, God made a way for us to be reconciled to Him, He moved towards the trouble. Hey, and peace can never be made by moving away from the trouble and a peacemaker involves loving before we are loved. And again, we can see that with God can't we? He loved us, and we love because he first loved us. And it involves us loving the person or whoever it might be, that we need to make peace with before they love us. And peacemaking as I said earlier is not the avoidance of conflict. If we avoid the conflict, it's often a conflict postponed. And with me, I'm getting much, much better with dealing with conflicts early, before it gets to the point where my thought life gets involved, and I'm not going to do this and whatever and my pride and yeah; there's a humility in being a peacemaker. Sometimes it's forgive me for how I've hurt you, but sometimes it's can I help you? How can we put this right? Now if the other person doesn't want to receive it, that's okay, sometimes it's a long journey. And sometimes we also have to practice restraint, especially with our tongue. But as I said, that doesn't mean we're a peacekeeper, as opposed to a peacemaker. Now, the reward of this is that there's a blessing, being a peacemaker.

As I said, Jesus was the ultimate peacemaker and He was the son of God. But it says here, in Matthew 5 verse 9, 'Blessed are the makers and maintainers of peace, for they shall be called the sons of God. Hey, so I want to encourage you this morning. Take courage. Fear has nothing to do with the kingdom of heaven. Step in to that ministry of reconciliation that you have, knowing that He is always with us and He is our example. He reconciled himself to us through Jesus, He made the first step so let him be, let

Jesus be the example. But if there's somebody today that you need to be reconciled with, have the courage to be a peacemaker. For 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God' Anyway, guys, bless you. Have a great morning. The sun is out in Shaftesbury today, and we'll see you soon. I look forward to hearing your stories of peacemaking because we have a ministry of reconciliation. So see you soon, bless you guys. Thanks for the comments.



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